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ABSTRACT

The competencies of the nation's workers have been improving steadily. However, the improvements have not kept pace with the increased skill demands imposed by technological advancement and the shift toward a service-based economy. Academic and functional literacy problems can only be alleviated by balancing school improvement efforts with improved efforts in homes and throughout the community. The net effect of Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) programs was found to depend on the extent of remediation and training in the service mix, with more intensive and longer employability development yielding more than proportional new impacts. It would thus appear that the greatest impacts would be secured under Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) programs by concentrating longer treatments on the more disadvantaged clients, beginning with remediation in basic skills for all entrants and selecting candidates for vocational training from those acquiring needed basic skills. JTPA programs should place more emphasis on basic skills competency and remediation. This could be done by having Service Delivery Areas exercise their authority to set detailed competency standards for academic, functional, and vocational instruction and identifying core curricula to help local delivery agents meet these standards as well as by refocusing the JTPA summer programs on remedial education and employability skills development. (MN)

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BACK TO BASICS UNDER JTPA

A Policy Statement by
The National Council on Employment Policy

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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The National Council on Employment Policy is a private, nonprofit organization of academicians and policy experts with a special interest and expertise in the area of employment and training. This policy statement is based on papers presented at the National Council on Employment Policy's Conference on Competencies and Computers, September 15-16, 1983. Papers are available at cost in a monograph published under the sponsorship of the National Council on Employment Policy by Olympus Press. This policy statement represents the combined judgment of the Council members. Despite divergence of opinions on details, the members agreed to a unanimous statement.

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The Competency Crisis

Millions of adults and young adults cannot read or comprehend this sentence. Tens of millions would find this short policy statement — on a subject of vital importance to them — an impossible challenge. Their lack of basic reading skills, matched by equally prevalent deficits in basic computational competencies, is a formidable, and frequently overwhelming, barrier to success in our economic, social, and political system. Those who are truly illiterate struggle to complete a job application or resume, to interpret transportation schedules in order to get to jobs if they can find them, to understand the health and safety warnings or company policies once on the job, or to make sense of the paychecks or benefit plans which are the fruits of their labor. The many more who are barely literate can handle day-to-day tasks, but have grave difficulty mastering new skills or adjusting to technological change. They cannot be trained for new or better jobs if they cannot handle the reading and math which are usually required. They may compensate by working hard and dependably, but if this commitment could be combined with greater competency, they would become both more productive and more economically successful.

The academic and functional literacy problems are not new and are not growing. The aging of better educated post-war babies has increased the educational attainment of the work force. Post-secondary attainment has expanded dramatically. Minorities and the disadvantaged have gained significantly in years of schooling and have made some relative progress in years of tested achievement. High school graduation rates have leveled off or slipped slightly over the last decades, but alternative education such as GED preparation has expanded significantly, balancing the slight erosion of tested

achievement among high school graduates. In the 1960s, the "discovery" that a third of young men could not pass minimal entry tests into the military was a prominent factor leading to the War on Poverty. Today, judged by the same test, the competence of the young adult population would be somewhat improved, although the improvements were mostly realized during the 1960s.

In the meantime, however, the competency demands of our economy and of everyday life have intensified. A service economy makes less use of brute strength and more of basic skills. Basic skills are required to adjust to accelerating technological change. Other countries competing in the world marketplace have achieved much greater educational progress. Even warfare has become more demanding. The military has significantly raised entry requirements, arguing that increased basic skills are needed to fight modern wars.

Thus, though the competencies of our nation's workers, soldiers, and citizens are improving, not eroding, we may be falling behind by not progressing faster, and the previously accepted deficits of a substantial minority of the population have increasingly serious consequences. Employers have begun to recognize that even in a period of high unemployment, the workers they can recruit do not always have the basic skills they expect and need. It is with some trepidation that employers look ahead to declining numbers of labor force entrants and tighter labor markets which will reduce the supply of skilled entry workers. Policymakers who have long touted our nation's education progress as a key ingredient in our economic growth, are now recognizing the converse — that increasing educational achievement in other countries has reduced, and in some cases reversed, our comparative advantage. Military recruiters worry about what will happen when the voluntary Armed Forces can no longer cream from a surplus of youthful

unemployed. Taxpayers are beginning to understand that illiteracy has expensive, life-long consequences. More immediately, they are clamoring to get more "bang" for their educational "bucks." Parents and students fear that the credentials for which they are sacrificing have become debased as standards have slipped, so that the payoffs may not be assured. They want competencies as well as credentials. Most critically, those whose skills are deficient, and who must compete for jobs in this period of persisting high unemployment, are increasingly suffering as the public safety nets protecting them in the past have unraveled.

Mobilizing Resources

Reflecting this concern and consensus, politicians and the press have declared a "Crisis in the Classroom," proposing a wide range of measures to solve the competency problem at its root — in the elementary and secondary schools — by implementing competency standards for teachers and students, providing merit pay, extending school years, expanding math and science curricula, or bringing more computers to the classroom. Whatever the viability or merit of these proposals, the fact remains that it will be years before reforms introduced in the next several years could show significant results among school leavers, and decades before the enhanced competencies of these cohorts would substantially upgrade the average skill level of the population. School reform may be necessary, but it is certainly not sufficient. Moreover, we tend to blame the schools for problems that may not be their responsibility. Most research suggests that home and community factors can offset the effect of schools. For instance, disadvantaged students tend to gain commensurately with the more advantaged during

the school year, but then to lose ground disproportionally during the summer months when they are outside the classroom. Moreover, many of those who need help most leave school early, sometimes because the schools have failed them, but other times because of personal or family problems, childbirth, or economic needs — factors which may have little to do with the quality of classroom education.

Hence, if the problems of academic and functional illiteracy are to be significantly alleviated, school improvement efforts must be balanced by expanded and improved efforts outside the schools — in homes, in churches, in voluntary organizations, but also in the remediation and training programs and institutions which deal every day with those who have already failed in or been failed by the schools.

The cornerstones of this remedial system are the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) and the Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs. With less than $100 million in federal funding matched by an equal state share, the Adult Basic Education system serves 2.3 million participants a year through a network of delivery agents selected by states and localities. ABE provides low-cost and not very intensive education, stretching ever more thinly its declining real dollars. The greater potential lies in JTPA, which has much more substantial resources (though still inadequate) and a broader mandate. Under its precursor, the CETA program, between 750 thousand and a million participants received academic and functional instruction in 1980. In passing JTPA, Congress restricted work experience which had predominated under CETA, aiming to increase remediation and training activities. With nearly $4 billion in annual appropriations, and with unit costs far exceeding those under Adult Basic Education, JTPA could potentially provide intensive and extensive basic skills instruction, albeit to only a portion of those really needing help. Its mandate is broad, encompassing full-time, year-round instruction

in residential Job Corps Centers serving the most economically disadvantaged youth; classroom training including English as a Second Language (ESL), academic, and life skills instruction as a supplement or as the primary service for disadvantaged adults, displaced workers and homemakers; summer employment activities which could have full- or part-time remediation components; and in-school transition programs offering instruction in functional and world-of-work competencies complementing academic instruction.

Certainly, the full use of these resources and approaches to address basic skills problems could have dramatic impacts. JTPA is already targeted on individuals with identified skills deficiencies. Relying almost completely on federal funds, there is limited risk of substituting federal for state and local resources and a minimal jurisdictional problem compared to federal interventions to help state- and locally-supported and directed schools. Because JTPA only began operations October 1, 1983, and because the new state and local decisionmaking structures are just focusing on service mix questions, there is an opportunity to increase dramatically the proportion of resources allocated for basic skills as well as to improve the ways in which these resources are utilized.

The issue, however, is whether the increased allocation of JTPA funds for basic academic and functional skills instruction would be merely "throwing dollars at problems." Can short-term JTPA interventions offset what years of schooling have failed to achieve? Can JTPA accomplish its primary employment mission if it emphasizes basic skills, since the severely disadvantaged with skills deficits are the most difficult to place in today's still slack labor market? Can JTPA be effective in basic skills instruction, and the quality of remedial activities improved? Convincing arguments and copious evidence suggest the answer to each of these questions is affirmative.

A Prime Factor In the Employment Equation

It is common sense that if two labor force participants are alike in every other way, the one with greater ability to read and understand want ads, to fill out job applications, to comprehend training and procedures manuals, or to perform work-related tasks requiring academic and functional skills has an advantage in getting, holding, and advancing in jobs. Employer surveys repeatedly document that their primary concern in choosing entry workers is basic skills. More than anything else, employers say, they want someone who can read, write, and compute well enough to be trained on the job, as well as someone who is functionally competent enough to show up for work and to follow instructions. Employers use educational credentials as one technique for determining whether applicants have these basic skills, though some employers also give tests when they doubt the integrity of credentials. Employers who deny any racism may "statistically discriminate" — for instance, discounting high school diplomas held by blacks relative to the high school diplomas held by whites because experience (backed by evidence) suggests that black graduates, on average, have lower academic competencies than white graduates. Blacks with good skills then suffer from not being given a chance to prove their abilities.

There are libraries of longitudinal studies documenting the payoff of the high school diploma. Adjusting for all other differences in background, youth who complete high school and do not go on to college can expect to earn at least three-fifths more than dropouts over the next ten years, and those who pursue higher education and complete college can expect to earn a third more than high school graduates who forsake further

education. The negative effect of dropping out of high school has been increasing over the last several decades, even as the positive earnings effect of college completion has been eroding slightly.

Students with greater abilities and competencies are more likely to graduate. Adjusting for all other differences, a third of the 15- and 16-year-olds with below average IQs are likely to drop out before completing school compared to a twentieth of those with above average IQs. The chances of dropping out of high school are a fourth for those scoring in the bottom third on the General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB) vocabulary test, compared to less than 2 percent for those scoring in the top third. Among seniors, the chances of going on to college are a fourth higher if achievement scores are a standard deviation above the mean, controlling for other differences. The chances of eventually completing college are four times higher for 15- and 16-year-olds with above average IQs, compared to those with below average IQs, again controlling for all other differences.

Whatever the level of attainment, those with measurably greater skills tend to do better over time. Among 1972 high school students with no further education, men scoring a standard deviation above the norm in reading and math achievement in high school had incomes 5 percent higher seven years later, after controlling for all other differences. For women, the payoff for a standard deviation of greater achievement was 10 percent seven years after leaving school.

An Essential Ingredient in Employability Development

It is possible to secure unsubsidized employment for some of the disadvantaged without enhancing their competencies. Sometimes they need motivation or encouragement. Sometimes they need information about where jobs are available. Placement, job search assistance and other labor market intermediation can sometimes overcome these obstacles, helping the labor market to function a little more effectively, particularly during periods of low unemployment. Placements can also be secured by offering "sticks and carrots" to employers, or simply by hustling to assure that participants get to the vacancies first, but such actions simply displace similar nonparticipants who would have gotten the same jobs. Displacement is more likely in a slack labor market where there are many applicants for few vacancies.

Net impacts on individual earnings and on the national economy are greatest when skills are increased meaningfully, and placements then capitalize on these skills. Evaluations of CETA youth and adult programs indicate uniformly that their net effect depends on the extent of remediation and training in the service mix, with more intensive employability development yielding more than proportional net impacts, particularly when combined with good placement efforts.

Closely related to the issue of treatment intensity is the question of service mix, i.e., how much weight to give to vocational training versus basic skills instruction. As a glance at the requirements section of the Dictionary of Occupational Titles will show, jobs that pay 50 percent or more above the minimum wage almost always require specific vocational preparation of over six months, and usually of over a year, assuming academic skills that are almost always beyond the eighth grade level, and usually at the high school

graduate level or beyond. If the duration of remediation and training is limited to six months or a year, there is hardly time to teach meaningful occupational skills to those who already have academic skills; certainly, there is little chance of remediating basic skills and then providing training. To keep unit costs down and placements up, the path of least resistance is to limit training to occupations such as word processing where training times are short when basic skills already exist, and then to limit enrollment to individuals creamed from the eligible population who already have basic competencies. However, many of these individuals could or would secure such training on their own, or else would find comparable jobs. CETA studies generally showed that more disadvantaged participants gained more from remediation and training relative to equally disadvantaged nonparticipants than did advantaged participants when compared to matched nonparticipants.

There are other arguments favoring an emphasis on basic skills instruction. Academic and functional competencies are demanded in all jobs, whereas vocational skills are not necessarily transferable. Remediation is less likely to be wasted than occupation-specific preparation (where, under CETA, less than two-fifths of participants in vocational components secured occupation-related placements). The limited available data suggests that basic education pays off for adults as much as vocational training. For youth programs, the evidence is fairly uniform that remedial education is the key factor in yielding post-program gains, and that the more disadvantaged the participant, the greater the net gains.

It is a reasonable hypothesis, then, that the greatest aggregate impacts would be secured under JTPA by concentrating longer duration treatments on the more disadvantaged beginning with remediation in basic skills for all entrants, and selecting

candidates for vocational training from those acquiring needed basic skills. Certainly, if the "hard-core" of the eligible population is to be served, which will be increasingly appropriate as recovery provides jobs for the more employable, remediation in basic skills should be a central component, both alone and in combination with vocational training.

Proven Performance, But Room for Improvement

The typical dropout who entered CETA had 5th to 6th grade reading and math skills after attending school between 10 and 12 years. The typical entrant with a high school diploma had tested skills in the 7th to 9th grade range after attending roughly 13 years to earn the diploma. In other words, their achievement in school was little more than half a normal grade equivalent for each year of attendance.

In CETA and Job Corps educational components, such disadvantaged participants ave[illegible]ed monthly reading and math gains which were triple those they had previously achieved in school. This was the record of run-of-the-mill, not exemplary, programs. In the best sites, and with the most effective approaches, gains were even more substantial. For instance, some of the best available curricula were developed with Department of Labor funding in the 1960s and 1970s, utilizing privately published kits of materials and audiovisual packages. These remediation activities have been implemented in self-standing, full-time and part-time programs, and as supplements to work and vocational training. They have been used with adults, youth, and special needs populations. They have been integrated with computer-assisted instruction. In other words, these programs of demonstrated effectiveness could be widely adopted, and would help to further improve the already positive record of remedial components.

Lessons have also been learned from the two decades of experience with education and life skills instruction since the Manpower Development and Training Act in the early 1960s. These lessons can help to further improve the effectiveness of any remedial activities under JTPA:

First, there is really no alternative to an individualized, self-paced approach, since entrants will have widely varying competencies and potential, since they may enter and exit from instruction at any time, and since the small scale of projects means that class grouping by ability is rarely possible. Programmed learning — which structures instruction into "bite-sized" units with mastery tests for each — works better for the disadvantaged than the traditional classroom approach because each person can be assigned to appropriate materials and can advance at his or her potential. There is immediate feedback, positive reinforcement, and both incentives and penalties to maximize time on task. Programmed instruction can be delivered by staffs not trained in lesson planning and educational theory.

Second, despite many exemplary local programs, the state and local infrastructure to deliver remedial academic and functional skills instruction is frequently deficient. It makes sense, then, for the states and Service Delivery Areas designated as managing agents under JTPA to select or develop a core curricula based on existing models of demonstrated effectiveness. These can be supplemented or modified by delivery agents, but they will provide the framework and foundation unless a better approach can be demonstrated in a specific site. Such standardization will facilitate technical assistance to delivery agents as well as economies in the larger-scale purchase of courseware and equipment.

Third, remediation is usually most effective when mixed with other activities or when scheduled only a few hours a day or a few days a week. Concentrated, full-day instruction will be unattractive to and less effective for most participants. To offer instruction as a part time activity requires a network of small centers in accessible locations. Indeed, almost all funded delivery agents will need education components.

Fourth, remediation should be offered episodically. It is not a one-shot affair. For instance, a 14-year-old summer enrollee is likely to reenroll the next year and the following. Half-day remediation (12 hours a week) for 10 weeks can raise reading and math skills as much as a grade level during one summer; and over three summers, this could mean the difference between graduating from high school or dropping out. But a 10-week crash course for an older drop-out who enters with 6th grade skills is not likely to raise him or her to high school equivalency competence (although it may coach him or her to pass the GED test!).

Fifth, microcomputers and other "training technologies" can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of remediation activities. For instance, computer-delivered lessons integrated with an individualized, self-paced curricula using paper-and-pencil booklets have produced extraordinary educational gain rates in Job Corps. This integration permits computer-assisted instruction for larger numbers at less cost, since there can be five or more participants per expensive terminal. Terminals can be added incrementally, and different types of hardware and software can be mixed. Microcomputers can also be used for automating the scoring of competency tests and the tracking of competency attainment, resulting in enormous reductions in paperwork. But experience has shown that technologies will not be purchased or used optimally if the acquisition decisions are left to isolated and small-scale delivery agents. Almost every

site will be operating from ignorance when it comes to purchasing computers. Few can afford the thousands of man-hours needed to screen and secure software. There are also very substantial discounts if hardware and software are purchased in volume. Likewise, th appropriate decisions will not be made unless funds are set aside for capital investment and infrastructure improvement. With low participant unit costs, it is difficult for delivery agents to buy equipment from any single year's funds. Expenditures must be amortized over multiple years, but delivery agents are uncertain of funding from one year to the next. Only a Service Delivery Area or state can be sure enough of the continuance of JTPA financing to undertake investments with multi-year amortization.

Corrective Actions

The Job Training Partnership Act provides the resources, mandate, and flexibility needed to address the "competency crisis" in a major way. Because JTPA decentralizes authority to the states and to an increased number of substate decisionmaking units, the realization of these possibilities will depend on the wisdom and understanding of a large number of independent decisionmakers. It is always tempting to declare a new national priority and to respond with a new national initiative, but we must give the JTPA system a chance to work (rather than constantly tampering with the legislative and administrative design as we did under CETA). States and Service Delivery Areas must, then, be left with the responsibility to decide how critical the competency issue may be within their jurisdictions, and the relative emphasis it should receive. To the degree that it <u>is</u> adjudged an important priority, however, states and SDAs could take any or all of the following actions:

First, it is important to begin with a clear concept of mission. Some rethinking may be required because appropriate goals are not always self-evident or easily demonstrable. Employment and training programs have their greatest net impact when they reach further back down the labor queue to the more disadvantaged. The employment effects of programs cannot be measured only in terms of short-run placements, but also in terms of competency gains which can increase employment prospects in the long run. Especially with projected changes in the content of jobs, training which increases general skills versus only specific vocational skills is appropriate. Creaming the most employable from the eligible population will result in higher placement rates, but less real impact on individuals or the local economy. There are greater risks in serving the disadvantaged; but there are also greater payoffs. The corollary is that only a minority of the severely disadvantaged will benefit substantially from remediation and will be able to advance to the point where they can be placed in a reasonably good job or enter training for a demanding occupation. Ignoring this fact will simply retain in programs those who do not gain competencies, while trying to place them at the end as if they had acquired skills will debase all training efforts. It is appropriate and vital to sort — not at the entry point into JTPA, which is creaming, but rather based on performance within competency-based programs. Conceptualized as a pyramid, remediation services should be offered to large numbers of severely disadvantaged, only a declining minority of whom will advance up the various steps of the pyramid. Vocational training should be at a higher stage, drawing primarily from those who have mounted the previous levels.

To implement this conceptual model, it is first necessary to measure competencies at entry, most easily done by giving uniform academic and functional skills

tests to all applicants and recording summary scores in the participant records. Such scores add significantly to the ability to determine the relative employability of different participants. Those with adequate skills should go into direct placement or OJT. The disadvantaged should enter the remediation component. Remediation components should use uniform tests, sensitive to the needs of ethnic and racial groups served, as benchmarks of in-program gains by participants which, when aggregated, can suggest delivery agent effectiveness. States and SDAs might establish uniform and protected testing procedures to assure the integrity of any test-based activities.

Vocational training should be limited to those who complete remediation and achieve the necessary entry competency levels, although further remediation can and should be combined with vocational training. Wage gains and training-related placements should be the performance standards for these higher stages, but at the lower levels in the service pyramid, more emphasis should be placed on measured in-program competency gains.

Thus, a more clearly conceptualized mission can be reinforced by structuring the contract and management information systems and by setting appropriate eligibility standards.

Second, there is enormous potential leverage in the JTPA state set-asides — 8 percent for education activities and 6 percent for incentive grants. It is possible, as well as desirable, for the Governors to use the 8 percent money for implementing remedial components for the disadvantaged which provide individualized, self-paced, and computer-aided learning. The issue is not resolved when the funds are divided among the post-secondary, vocational, and secondary schools; it is possible and appropriate to call the shots on <u>how</u> these funds are used by the competing systems and bureaucracies.

Many Governors have announced literacy and school reform initiatives. The 8 percent money should be seen as an additional (perhaps even a fundamental) tool to bolster remedial efforts for dropouts or to mount functionally-oriented transition programs for students. It is the Governor's responsibility to assure that this educational money does not substitute for existing expenditures, and the best way is to reserve it for specific projects with line-item budgets and structured, identifiable activities.

Some Service Delivery Areas are abdicating remediation responsibilities, claiming that they will or should be financed only from 8 percent funds. There is and should be no such limitation. Indeed, evaluations of CETA have demonstrated the need to upgrade the quality of the remediation and training infrastructure in many state and local areas. The 6 percent incentive grants might, therefore, be used to encourage remediation efforts beyond the 8 percent activities. For instance, state incentive funds could be used to match SDA amortization payments on investments in equipment and materials, particularly microcomputers, for service delivery.

Third, the states and Service Delivery Areas have the authority, if they choose to use it, to set detailed competency standards for academic, functional, and vocational instruction. They can also identify core curricula options which will help delivery agents to meet such standards, using centralized purchasing of equipment, materials, and software to achieve volume discounts. Matching money from the 6 percent set-asides could encourage delivery agents to purchase from these centralized sources. If there are numerous users, standardized technical assistance would also be feasible. For the more adventuresome states and SDAs, a nonprofit entity might be used to borrow funds to purchase equipment in quantity and to provide the technical assistance needed for its effective use. Repayment over three to five years could be made with fees subtracted

from JTPA grants to those delivery agents utilizing the purchased equipment and materials.

Fourth, the summer program, which serves 700,000 disadvantaged youth each year, could be refocused to combine work with remedial education and employability skills development. A suggested approach is to require participation in unstipended remediation activities during one fourth to one half of participation hours in order to qualify for employment. Cash incentives might be provided for achievements in the education components, or a "GI bill" account might be accrued for participants to finance future investments in education and training. This summer remediation and work combination — which is allowable and, indeed, encouraged under current law and regulations — would help overcome the large educational slippage experienced by the disadvantaged during the summer months. It would reduce compensation per hour of participation without reducing wages for hours of work. It would provide encouragement for more learning. And it would cost no more, since the education component and any participant incentives could be financed with the savings from the reduced wage bill. Indeed, it should be possible to expand enrollments using this service mix, since the unit costs per hour of remediation tend to be less than the minimum wage.

The federal government could also encourage these recommended changes in the summer program. Rather than disbursing the carry-over funds from the previous summer as last minute "giveaways," these funds can be allocated as incentive grants for program improvement. States implementing the recommended mix of education and employment services in the summer programs would be eligible for these funds.

Fifth, technical assistance and research is needed at the federal level to identify and catalog the most cost-effective academic and functional skills curricula, as well as

computer hardware and software (including JTPA-oriented computerized Management Information Systems). Where effective software or paper-and-pencil materials have been developed under public funding, such as the excellent Job Corps GED booklets, they should be reproduced and distributed at cost to states and SDAs. Some investments might be warranted in the development of new materials — for instance, videodisk lessons on life skills, since the technology is cost-effective but the market has not reached the critical mass to support the preparation of such lessons or the purchase of relatively inexpensive disk players. Public domain tests might be developed at the national level to measure employment-related skills such as academic competencies below the GED level or functional competencies. These tests could build on substantial previous public investments, and they could be provided free to states and SDAs to help them meet requirements for benchmarking and competency-based programming. Studies of the relationship between basic skills, employability and on-the-job performance are needed, as well as studies of the effectiveness of computer-assisted instruction in remedial settings. Particularly in recent years, the Department of Labor has largely abdicated its technical assistance and research responsibilities, but it has the authority and resources under the Job Training and Partnership Act to undertake these critical missions.

A Few Modest Proposals

There are three areas where legislative action could have quite significant impacts with minimal budgetary implications:

First, a Job Training Technologies Act, focused on improving our nation's remediation and training infrastructure by taking advantage of microcomputers and other training technologies of demonstrated effectiveness, would be a useful supplement to the Job Training Partnership Act. It would provide loan guarantees or loans for the purchase of education and training equipment and courseware, including computers and software, which would be used by JTPA delivery agents. The loans would be amortized over five years, chargeable to "training materials" under JTPA grants. The loans or guarantees would be allocated to states and Service Delivery Areas in proportion to their JTPA allocations, and the same decisionmaking rules would pertain. The only additional requirement would be that the recipients submit a technical plan to the Department of Labor indicating how they would use the provided equipment and materials effectively, how they would deliver technical assistance to computer users, and how they would centralize purchasing to achieve volume discounts on computers and courseware.

This approach would help provide the capital needed to upgrade the remediation infrastructure, and it would help overcome the hand-to-mouth type of programming that undermined the effectiveness of CETA. But because it would use loans which would be paid back out of relatively assured and already budgeted JTPA funds, there would be no effect on the federal deficit. The annual expenditures allowed JTPA grantees for training and equipment and materials might be raised to 15 percent of allocated funds. If used over five years to amortize capital expenditures, purchased equipment and

materials could equal half of a state or SDA's annual allocation. This could certainly result in a substantial improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of JTPA remediation and training activities.

Second, anticipating increased recruiting difficulties in the voluntary Armed Services as the economy recovers and the size of the eligible population declines, it is vital to establish an on-going mechanism for linking JTPA with this important employment sector. Among individuals who have tried to enlist in the Armed Forces but were rejected are many who could effectively serve. However, the attrition risks and preparatory costs to the military are too high. JTPA could reduce these risks and share some of the costs by providing extended remediation geared to the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, with guaranteed enlistment for those completers voluntarily choosing a military career. JTPA would, thus, identify those among the disadvantaged willing to "stay the course" and able to master the skills required by the Armed Forces. The Armed Services would get applicants who could meet all entry requirements and who would be identifiably low-risk accessions. JTPA delivery agents would get certifiable job placements using remedial instruction, courseware and equipment applicable in all other remediation activities with those among the disadvantaged not seeking military service. The disadvantaged who would have otherwise been rejected by the Armed Forces would get a chance at good jobs and training in the military.

Despite the common sense of such linkages, ad hoc agreements between the civilian and military bureaucracies have floundered in the past. Greater leverage is needed, which could be provided by legislatively stipulating that 10 percent of Armed Forces accessions be drawn from JTPA and prepared to entry standards by remedial

components using an individualized, self-paced, computer-based instructional approach certified by the Armed Forces as preparing participants effectively for the military.

Third, a number of job creation measures are currently under consideration in Congress, including adult and youth community service approaches, public works employment programs, and a conservation corps for young adults. The experience with previous work programs counsels that significant remediation elements should be a central feature of any work programs whose aim is to employ the disadvantaged. The easiest approach is to require that 25 percent of any appropriated funds be used for education and training, and that all participants spend at least one fourth of participation hours in unstipended remediation. Delivery agents can, then, best determine how this remediation can be delivered, whether through purchase of service from local providers or the implementation of a standardized remediation component. A more innovative option would be to offer "GI bill" scholarships for further training and education for those who achieve well in the unstipended remediation components. While job creation measures must be considered on their own merits, the inclusion of remediation components can make them more cost-effective for no extra outlay.

Thus, there is a variety of ways that the resources allocated for employment and training activities could be deployed effectively to address the "competency crisis." This would not be a diversion of funds, but rather a focusing which would help employment and training programs best achieve their primary mission of helping the disadvantaged upgrade their skills to compete more effectively, to secure better jobs, to increase their productivity and earnings, and to contribute more to the wealth of our nation.